



Brownfields and RISC

One of the hottest issues surrounding the discussion of IDEM's Risk Integrated System of Closure (RISC) policy for existing cleanup programs is how it will affect brownfields. Some fear that the requirements identified in RISC will discourage prospective developers from pursuing redevelopment of contaminated properties. However, it is important to understand that RISC is not just about risk-based remedy alternatives, but attempts to offer a unifying standard for closure at any site under any program. Standards of site screening, investigation, cleanup and closure can be fairly and consistently applied by a "mom and pop gas station" as well as by giant manufacturing facilities. Such sites being proposed for redevelopment should still meet the same standards to be protective of human health and the environment.

The Brownfields Program's primary goal is to identify and reduce environmental liability issues that impede the economic growth of Indiana communities, resulting in improved environmental and economic health for Indiana's citizens. By partnering with communities and offering technical and financial assistance, the Brownfields Program facilitates brownfields redevelopment activities. Ultimately, property transfers can be realized through the different forms of "closure" provided by the program. To address the environmental liability concerns for these properties, the Brownfields Program developed Comfort Letters and Site Status Letters as two forms of closure. These letters are designed to limit or quantify liability and encourage redevelopment of identified brownfield properties by providing an assessment of possible legal actions against a seller, owner or potential purchaser of a brownfield property.

The RISC policy has been available as a tool in addition to IDEM's Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) Tier II cleanup criteria for Brownfields Program grant and loan recipient properties, as well as Comfort Letter and Site Status Letter recipient properties. IDEM provides technical assistance by reviewing all grant and loan applications to ensure that the proposed environmental work to be completed is adequate, by providing field oversight and by reviewing the subsequent reports to ensure that projects meet applicable closure objectives. Environmental work is also reviewed for Comfort Letter and Site Status Letter requests. The Brownfields Program intends to follow RISC procedures for conducting its own Brownfield Environmental Assessments (BEAs), which should facilitate a site's entry into VRP if desired. To maintain consistency, environmental sampling that is in line with RISC principles should be used.

The Brownfields Program may also facilitate the cleanup/closure of a brownfield site through IDEM's VRP, IDEM's Leaking Underground Storage Tank program, or IDEM's Immediate Removals program, which are three important avenues for brownfield sites where cleanup activities are necessary. As such, the need for consistency among programs is heightened.

The benefits of the Brownfields Program implementing RISC include the establishment of consistent screening and/or characterization techniques and streamlined transition procedures to an IDEM remediation program. The adoption of the RISC approach toward environmental closure will aid staff in the development of standard operating procedures, provide consistent responses for stakeholders, and will virtually eliminate "program shopping" for facilities looking for a break in requirements. Also, the level of comfort afforded to participants in the Brownfields Program will increase if held to a minimum standard, that being RISC default.

In an effort to continue informing stakeholders of the latest brownfields related news pertaining to IDEM's RISC policy, the Brownfields Program published the following three articles in past Brownfields Bulletin issues:

[Brownfields and RISC – program and policy unite, 2nd Quarter 2000, Issue 7](#)

[RISC User's Guide, Brownfields Program Chapter – new kid on the block, 4th Quarter, Issue 9 \(Revised\)](#)

[RISCy Business, 2nd Quarter 2001, Issue 11](#)

[More information on IDEM's RISC policy](#)